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Article

REDD+ Policy Approaches in the Congo Basin: A Comparative Analysis of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

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Abstract: The Congo Basin forests are a prime location for implementing REDD+. National REDD+ policy processes are ongoing and many REDD+ pilot initiatives are being demonstrated. However, the level of national engagement, progress and distribution of REDD+ activities varies considerably in the different Congo Basin countries. This study therefore uses a set of criteria to assess national and international policy initiatives and approaches for advancing REDD+ implementation in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), two countries where more than two thirds of the Congo Basin forests are concentrated. Our findings show that (i) both countries have shown the highest political presence at the international climate negotiations but DRC has invested more in the size of its delegation and side events; (ii) REDD+ donors, initiatives, and funding are disproportionately skewed towards DRC making it technically more advanced; (iii) the high political interest and institutional reforms in DRC favors private sector investments in REDD+ programs; and (iv) the REDD+ policy process is internally-driven in Cameroon with a strong national ownership, while it is externally-driven in DRC with weak national ownership. To advance REDD+, the government of DRC should embark on capacity building programs that ensure the transfer of REDD+ technical know-how from

international to national actors while Cameroon needs to speed-up governance reforms and be more flexible in order to attract influential international REDD+ actors. This paper further provides specific recommendations.

Keywords: Congo declaration; forest governance; REDD+; UNFCCC

1. Introduction

Efforts by many countries to “reduce emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and to promote the conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of carbon stocks (REDD+)” are critical to mitigating the effects of anthropogenic climate change. The fundamental principles of REDD+ as agreed by countries (parties) at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Cancun include [1] the voluntary participation of parties; achievable emissions reduction targets; and a performance-based reward system subjected to monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV). Besides emission reductions, many argue that a proper implementation of REDD+ can promote good forest governance and is also expected to alleviate poverty especially within indigenous and local forest-dependent communities [2–4]. So far, more than 50 developing countries are participating on a voluntary basis to reduce emissions under the REDD+ mechanism. These countries are preparing and employing different initiatives, activities as well as policy approaches and strategies to move REDD+ forward.

In many parts of the world, several studies have been conducted with the objective of evaluating and comparing existing REDD+ initiatives, projects, thematic issues, programs, policies and strategies at different spatial scales. For example, Cronkleton *et al.* [5] showed that community forest management in Mexico, Brazil, and Honduras has played a great role in advancing the REDD+ mechanism. More specifically, they revealed that sustainable management of these forests in the aforementioned countries has shown progress in reducing deforestation and forest degradation. Estrada *et al.* [6] compared a group of 26 countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia as concerns the potential social and environmental ramifications of REDD+ implementation in their jurisdictions. Environmental ramifications included preventing biodiversity loss in the short and medium term while livelihoods improvement were identified as the main social impacts.

Somorin *et al.* [7] employed the frame analysis and discourse theory to assess the manner in which different agents entertain frames on REDD+ policies in the Congo Basin. They found that the various frames expressed around each discourse by stakeholders included features revolving around finance, costs and benefits, efficiency, and scale of operation. In a synthetic review of REDD+ implementation in Africa, Mbow *et al.* [8] highlight the specific challenges inherent in REDD+ implementation in Africa including, among other, the absence of fairness and accountability for compensating carbon gains, poor forest governance, and ineffective monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) system. Aquino and Guay [9] evaluate the emerging REDD+ governance framework in the DRC and argue that this framework will likely receive legitimacy from different shareholders driving the REDD+ process in the country. Furthermore, they contend that the framework will be more effective in

permitting the country to address the direct causes of deforestation and forest degradation through international payments from REDD+ projects.

Despite all these studies, little in the way of research has been undertaken on a comparative analysis of the efforts of Congo Basin countries around national and international relationships of REDD+ policy approaches. The intent of this paper is to fill this gap in REDD+ implementation approaches applied in the Congo Basin by asking two basic questions: What is the difference in engagement strategies on REDD+ mechanism in different Congo Basin countries at the national and international levels? And what are the implications of different key stakeholders' involvement in the REDD+ policy process in different Congo Basin countries? This paper seeks to answer these questions by comparing national and international policy initiatives and approaches for advancing REDD+ implementation in the Congo Basin. Additionally, this paper offers a series of policy recommendations for advancing REDD+ implementation in the Congo Basin with a particular focus on DRC and Cameroon.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 sets the context of the research by providing an overview of REDD+ in the Congo Basin with emphasis on Cameroon and DRC. The socio-economic and development status of the study countries are described and the methods used in answering the research questions outlined in Section 3. Section 4 presents the results and discussions along two strategic lines: international and national actions, while Section 5 concludes and provides recommendations moving forward with REDD+ in DRC and Cameroon.

2. REDD+ in the Congo Basin

The Congo Basin, the second largest rainforest in the world after the Amazon, covers about 227 million hectares in six countries and represents about 18% of the world's tropical forests. The region's forest cover is slowly being destroyed or degraded mainly by firewood extraction, shifting agricultural activities, mining, logging, agri-business expansion, and infrastructural development [10]. In addressing these threats from deforestation and forest degradation, development partners as well as Congo Basin countries consider Congo Basin forests as prime location for REDD+ implementation. Having recognized the relatively lower annual deforestation rate of 0.26% [11], the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) is keen to explore forest conservation and sustainable forest management under REDD+ activities with the ultimate goal of contributing to national green development agendas. REDD+ is therefore challenged to address, amongst others, environmental, political and social problems in the Congo Basin related to weak governance, land use planning and land tenure, and the rights of marginalized local communities.

The REDD+ process, with the exception of Gabon, is common in nine of the ten member states of COMIFAC (Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo (RoC), Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe). The exception of Gabon in the REDD+ process can be explained by the fact that Gabon is taking a Low Carbon Development (LCD) or Green Economy (GE) approach to climate change. This LCD approach remains to be clearly understood in the design and implementation phases of Gabon's National Climate Plan [12]. More generally, in the Congo Basin, the Ministry of Environment is the leading and coordinating REDD+ institution both internally in the respective countries and externally at the climate convention (UNFCCC). In the case of Gabon, climate related issues are managed

internally by the National Climate Council sitting at the President's Office while external climate issues and processes related to UNFCCC are handled by the Ministry of Economy.

In terms of progress this far, REDD+ process is most advanced in four Congo Basin countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Republic of Congo (RoC). This paper draws on two of the four countries (DRC and Cameroon) to closely examine and compare the REDD+ policy process in the Congo Basin. The paper focuses on Cameroon and DRC because the two countries contain more than half of the Congo Basin forests. The state of REDD+ process in both countries is a fairly good representation of REDD+ in the Congo Basin region. Both countries have developed a REDD preparation plan (REDD+ Readiness Plan Idea Note: R-PIN and REDD+ Readiness Preparation Plan: RPP), developed a regulatory framework concerning the approval of REDD+ projects, and are elaborating their national REDD+ strategy. However, DRC was the first Congo Basin country to have a validated the (R-PP while Cameroon was the last of the four Congo Basin countries to have validated this plan. DRC in addition has a national forest monitoring system, national REDD+ trust fund and has developed a national REDD+ standards. DRC has also established a national REDD+ registry to document information about REDD+ projects in DRC, and is currently elaborating and developing an Emission Reduction Programme Idea Note (ER-PIN) and implementing its forest investment program. Stakeholders involved in the REDD+ process in both countries come from government, civil society, private sector and technical and financial institutions (Table 1).

Table 1. Key stakeholders involved in the REDD+ process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Cameroon.

Democratic Republic of Congo	Cameroon
Government Entities (Role: overall coordination of REDD+ process and programs)	
National Coordination REDD+ (CN-REDD), Direction of Sustainable Development (DDD), MECNT-Direction of Inventories and Forest Improvement (DIAF), Ministry of Finance, Committee for Technical Reform, Province of Bandundu-Ministry of environment.	National Coordination REDD+ (CN-REDD), Ministries in charge of forest (MINFOF), economy (MINEPAT), environment (MINEPDED), livestock (MINEPIA), water (MINEE), agriculture (MINADER), mining (MINMIDT), <i>etc.</i>
Civil Society Organization (Role: implement projects and ensure civil society participation in REDD+ process)	
Climate and REDD+ Working Group (GTCR), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Forest Governance Observatory (OGF), Satellite Observatory of Central Africa Forests (OSFAC)	National Climate change and REDD+ Civil Society Platform, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS),
Private sector (Role: invest and implement REDD+, agriculture, logging, conservation and other projects)	
Wildlife Works Carbon (WWC), SOGENAC, NOVACEL, Federation of Wood Industries (FIB)	
Donor and Technical Partners (Role: Provide technical and financial support for REDD+ activities and projects)	
Governments of USA (USAID/CARPE), Norway (NORAD), Japan (JICA/JAFTA), Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), UN-REDD programme, Forest Investment Programme (FIP), Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF), Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)	Governments of Germany (GIZ), USA (USAID/CARPE), France (AFD), Japan (JICA), Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), IUCN, GAF-AG, World Agroforestry Centre(ICRAF), Independent national consultants,



Hypothetically, we would expect Cameroon to be ahead of the DRC in the REDD+ process given its high Environmental Performance Index (EPI) scores on environmental and forest governance and its longer history and leadership position in terms of forest reforms in the Congo Basin. However, this is not the case. Thus, another fundamental reason for selecting both countries is to understand this change in dynamics.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Countries

This study focuses more at the macro (national and international) and less at the micro (field) level of DRC and Cameroon. The study country DRC has a population of 67.51 million people with a 2013 annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 8.5%. Cameroon on the other hand has a population of 22.5 million with a 2013 GDP growth rate of 5.5% [13]. Both countries are rich in forest (Figure 1), agricultural land, rainfall, minerals and other natural resources. Despite this vast natural capital, both countries have a low human development index (HDI) that is in one way reflected through persistent poverty, hunger and food insecurity [14]. The 2012 HDI value for DRC stand at 0.30 and is ranked 186 out of 187 countries while for Cameroon, the value is 0.49 and is ranked 150 out of the 187 countries [15]. For 2012, life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling and the population at purchasing power parity 1.25 USD a day below income poverty line were 48.7 years, 8.5 years and 87.7% for DRC and 52.1 years, 10.9 years and 9.6% for Cameroon. It is also important to note the political instability and civil wars have greatly retarded development efforts in DRC.

Figure 1. Land and forest areas in DRC and Cameroon Sources: adapted from [10,11].

	DRC	Cameroon
		
Total land area (ha)	231,822,500	46,544,500
Total lowland dense forest area (ha)	101,822,027	18,640,192
Commercial logging concessions (ha)	12,184,130	6,381,684

3.2. Data Type and Collection

The researchers employed in this study, a three step comparative qualitative research approach for data collection obtained principally from secondary and primary data.

Firstly, the assessment criteria presented in Table 2 were formulated to assist in the comparison between approaches for advancing REDD+ implementation in Cameroon and DRC and to assess their overall effectiveness. The researchers have well-established work and working relations with the different levels of REDD+ stakeholders in the Congo Basin, hence facilitating communication, review and the identification of an initial list of key areas for the comparison. The list was shared, discussed and pre-tested with (seven) selected REDD+ experts in the Congo Basin and beyond. A final adjusted list of eleven criteria was established under two categories—national and international processes. The formulated criteria were based largely on common REDD+ policy initiatives and processes adopted and implemented at the international and national levels by both countries to support the REDD+ mechanism. Both countries for example are engaged in the UNFCCC process and also systematically following the preparation, investment and implementation phases of REDD+.

Table 2. Assessment criteria for REDD+ policy approaches in Cameroon and DRC.

1. Engagement in REDD Multilateral Processes
1.1. Congo Regional Context
1.2. UNFCCC Negotiations (COP, SBSTA, SBI)
1.3. REDD+ Support Process (FCPF, UN-REDD)
1.4. Multilateral and Bilateral Financial Flows
2. National level
2.1. Resolution of Rights (Carbon and tenure)
2.2. National Forest Monitoring System and MRV
2.3. Establishment of a Conflict Resolution Framework
2.4. Development of REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP)
2.5. Development of a National REDD+ Strategy/Fund
2.6. Platform for Key Stakeholder Participation
2.7. REED+ Demonstrations and Private Sector Investments
2.8 Benefit Sharing Mechanisms

Secondly, we conducted a detailed review and analysis of relevant government REDD+ policy documentations (R-PIN, R-PP, and ER-PIN) and reports from the UNFCCC secretariat. Documents published by civil societies, consultants, national and international NGOs, as well as bilateral and multilateral REDD+ initiatives that are relevant in the context of the study were also consulted. Additional information from peer reviewed journal articles was used to underpin this synthesis where relevant.

Thirdly, individual open ended structured experts' interviews and judgment were conducted using the assessment criteria in Table 1. The expert interviews and judgment provide authoritative and valuable views that help researchers to make predictions [16,17]. In-depth discussions were held with a selected number of 10 pre-eminent resource persons from 8 key government institutions in Cameroon and DRC, as well as from regional and international organizations working on REDD+ in the Congo Basin region (Table 3). The selection criteria for the interviewees included: (i) Participation in national

REDD+ process in either DRC or Cameroon or both; (ii) Participation in COMIFAC Climate Working Group where climate focal persons and REDD+ coordinators from different Congo Basin countries discuss regional level issues on climate change and REDD+ (iii) Participation during UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice/Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBSTA/SBI) sessions; and (iv) Good knowledge of REDD+ initiatives, donors, investments, and finance.

Table 3. Affiliations of the interviewees.

Affiliation	Interviewees
Cameroon's Ministry of Environment Nature Protection and Sustainable Development	1
DRC Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism	1
German Agency for Development Cooperation (GIZ)	1
MRV Project of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)	2
World Resource Institute (WRI)	1
Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)	1
International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA)	2
German REDD+ consultancy firm (GAF-AG)	1

4. Results and Discussion

A summary of the findings are presented in Table 4. Each is then discussed in turn.

4.1. International Actions

4.1.1. Congo Regional Engagement

DRC and Cameroon are both Congo Basin countries and members of COMIFAC with respective dense forest areas of 101,822,027 ha and 18,640,192 ha and a net annual deforestation rate (2000–2005) of 0.22% and 0.03% respectively. As one regional expert opined:

“Both Cameroon and DRC are very active at the regional level and each has a comparative advantage. Cameroon is the host of COMIFAC therefore participates in many meetings and workshops organized in Cameroon while DRC is the host of too many REDD+ pilot projects and has been the chair of the COMIFAC Climate Working Group”.

Through the COMIFAC Climate Change Working Group, DRC and Cameroon actively participate in post and pre UNFCCC COP and SBSTA/SBI sessions to evaluate their negotiation performances and outcomes as well as prepare next UNFCCC negotiation steps for the COMIFAC member states. In all these sessions, it can be argued that DRC has been more proactive and strategic than Cameroon. This is because DRC took the leadership position as the sitting chair and president of COMIFAC from 2009 to 2012. This leadership role boosted the technical and political visibility of DRC during all international REDD+ processes and meetings where COMIFAC countries are invited or participated. Moreover, relative to Cameroon, DRC met with many REDD+ donors as the chair of COMIFAC and had more possibilities to discuss REDD+ issues important not only for the entire Congo Basin region but also for DRC as a country.

Table 4. Key similarities and differences of REDD+ policy approaches in DRC and Cameroon.

Thematic Area	Similarities	Differences
Congo Regional Context	Signatories to the REDD+ Congo Declaration	DRC dense forest is 5.5 times larger than Cameroon's forest. From 2009 to 2012, DRC chaired COMIFAC
Participation in SBSTA and SBI		From 2005 to 2013, the number of delegates from DRC doubles that from Cameroon
Participation in COPs		From 2005 to 2013, delegates from DRC are 5 times more than delegates from Cameroon
REDD+ Support Process	Members of FCPF and are engaged in REDD+ readiness	DRC is a UN-REDD country and is now in the investment phase
Multilateral-Bilateral Engagements		DRC enjoys a strong technical and financial support from key donors while Cameroon struggles
Resolution of Rights	Vague carbon rights. Forests are largely owned by the state	Indigenous and local communities have user rights in the context of community forestry in Cameroon
Forest Monitoring System and MRV		While Cameroon does not yet have an MRV system, DRC has 2 management agencies and 3 MRV pillars
Conflict Resolution Framework	Separate frames envisaged for local and national conflict resolution	
Development of R-PP		Donor-driven, weak national ownership in DRC. State-driven, strong national ownership in Cameroon
National REDD+ Strategy		Validated in DRC with strong external support while Cameroon is at the embryonic stage of development
National REDD+ Fund		Under construction in DRC while Cameroon is at the embryonic stage of discussions
Stakeholders' Participation	Meaningful participation of civil society debatable in both countries	
REDD+ Demonstrations		Only feasibility studies conducted in Cameroon while REDD+ Emission Reduction Program exist in DRC
Private Sector Investment		Procedures and institutional set up more favorable for REDD+ investment in DRC than in Cameroon
Benefit Sharing	No specific nationally adopted REDD+ benefit sharing scheme exist	

In another Congo Basin regional REDD+ context, Cameroon and DRC are signatories of the joint declaration of intent between Central African countries (Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, DRC, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Chad) and donor countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, UK, USA and EU) to promote and scale up REDD+ implementation in the Congo Basin region. While a tentative roadmap for the implementation of this declaration is under discussion, operationalization remains far from reality. A strong international support and funding agreements from donors like Norway is lacking compared to REDD+ agreements made between Norway and Brazil, Indonesia and Guyana to the tune of USD 2.5 billion. Donors are rather indirectly funding small scale pilot REDD+ projects in the Congo Basin region—which are largely concentrated in the DRC.

4.1.2. Participation at the UNFCCC Negotiations

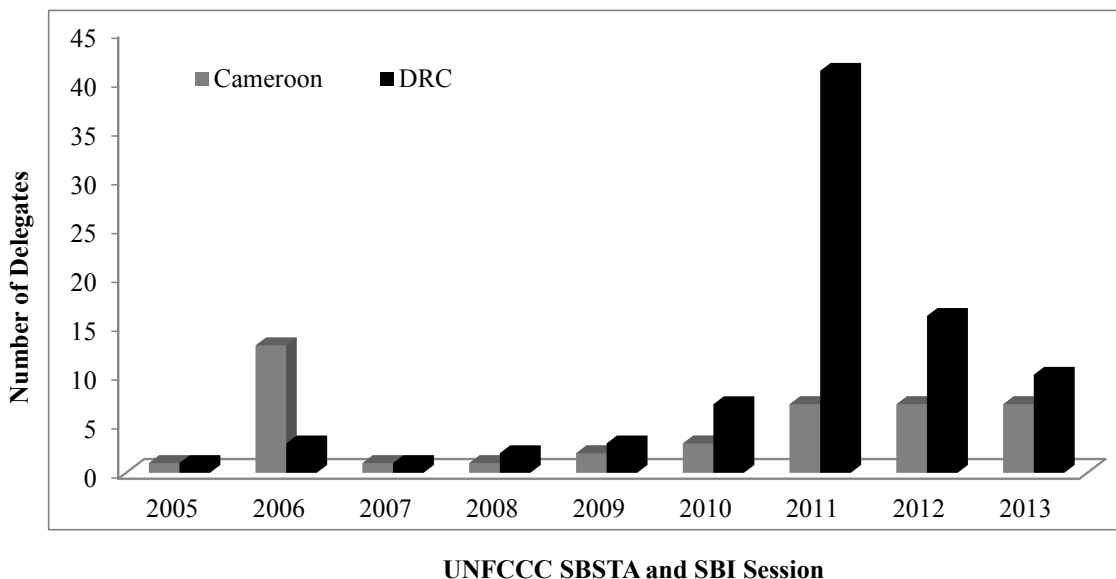
Government representatives from Cameroon and DRC are mobilized yearly to effectively participate, engage, and influence REDD + decisions that are taken during the UNFCCC COP and SBSTA/SBI sessions. An international expert noted that “the motivation is clearly rooted in the hope to receive financial support for REDD+ as soon as possible”. On average, for the past nine years (2005 to 2013) of REDD+ negotiations at SBSTA/SBI, the number of delegates from DRC have doubled the number of delegates from Cameroon (see Figure 2). On technical issues, positions and statements for negotiations, differences between the two countries are minimal due to the fact that COMIFAC, of which both DRC and Cameroon are members, is the body under which the two countries develop and submit common positions to SBSTA and SBI. Many a time, the position of COMIFAC on REDD+ is aligned with that of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN) of which Cameroon and DRC are active members. One example is the strong and successful lobbying and negotiation of the Congo Basin countries’ climate/REDD+ focal persons and member countries of CfRN to include sustainable forest management and conservation within the REDD+ activities. Another common position of both countries under COMIFAC, as well as member states of CfRN is the inclusion of non-carbon benefits into the design and implementation of REDD+ activities. However, for both examples, Cameroon and DRC, under the umbrella of COMIFAC, fall short of substantiating their negotiation positions with concrete technical and methodological submissions to SBSTA to guide the advancement and implementation of their positions. This can be explained by the general absence, inadequacy or inconsistency of highly skilled and specialized expertise to support and further substantiate negotiation positions of DRC, Cameroon and the COMIFAC member countries in general.

Looking into REDD+ negotiations at COP, the number of delegates on average for the past 8 years (2005 to 2012) from DRC have been about 5 times more than delegates from Cameroon (see Table 4). Figure 3 shows that the number of delegates from DRC has drastically increased as from 2008 with the highest number recorded during COP 17 in Durban, South Africa. Cameroon, on the other hand, mobilized its highest number of delegates during COP 15 in Copenhagen that accompanied the participation of the president.

The composition of the delegates over the years has been, to an extent, very similar for both countries with delegates from the ministry in charge of forestry and environment, the ministry in charge of foreign and diplomatic affairs, the prime minister’s office, and certain delegates from local and international non-governmental organizations. However, the composition of DRC is richer, with

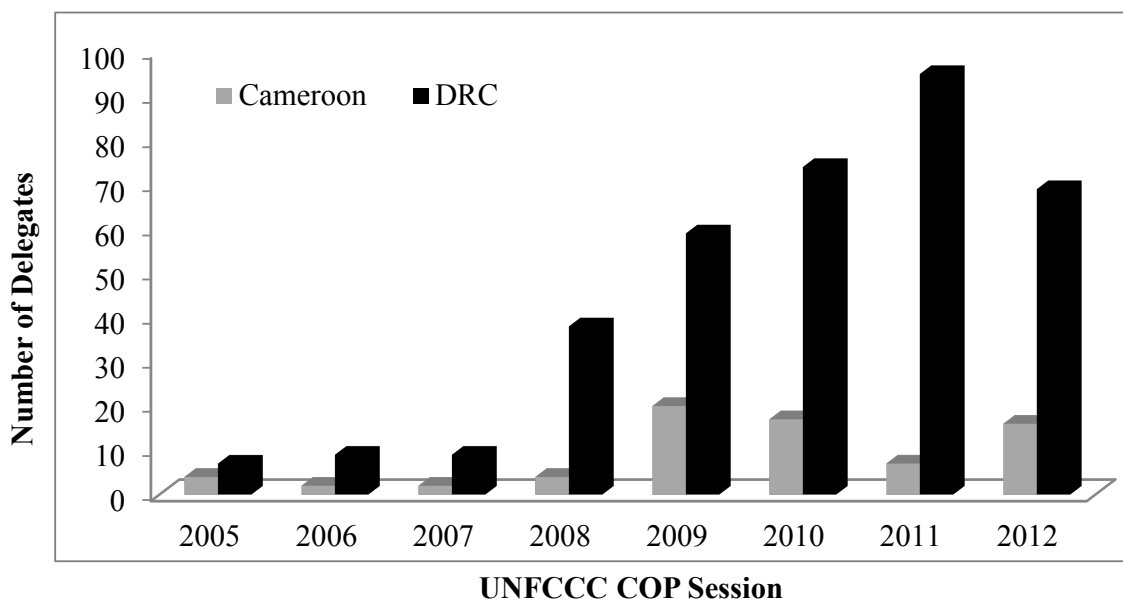
delegates from additional institutions including representatives of indigenous peoples, provincial heads at the sub-national level, ministries in charge of land and planification as well as journalists and communication experts. This trend was explained by one expert in DRC who stated that:

Figure 2. Participation of delegates during SBSTA and SBI REDD+ sessions.



(Source: Authors’ design based on UNFCCC SBSTA participants list from 2005 to 2013).

Figure 3. Participation of delegates during UNFCCC COP and REDD+ sessions.



(Source: Authors’ design based on UNFCCC COP participants list from 2005 to 2012).

“Very high importance is given to REDD+ by the government of DRC and this is often reflected in the large number and diversity of delegation to the UNFCCC process. The DRC government through its national budget is taking care and funding many of its participants to the UNFCCC events” which is not the case with the government of Cameroon. A possible reason underpinning this finding could be

that the DRC has more financing and political will which has enabled it to send more delegates to these meetings.

For both countries, the delegations are technically led by the climate focal persons—who have been stable in the same position since 2005 and provide a very good understanding and background knowledge of the issues under negotiations. These focal persons also guide the rest of the teams as well as their political leads who are often the ministers in charge of environment or the president who take political decisions on behalf of their countries. In the English dominated UNFCCC COP fora, a majority of the French speaking delegates struggle with negotiations both at the technical and political levels. Cameroon, being a French and English speaking country, is however, assumed to be better placed to engage in English during COP closed and opened door sessions including side events. As corroborated by a national expert in Cameroon: “The position of Cameroon is often taken into account in the UNFCCC process, thanks to the bilingual outspoken climate focal person”.

Outside closed door negotiations, delegates of many governments and private institutions organize side events. In general, the government of Cameroon (GoC) has organized or participated in fewer REDD+ side events compared to the government of DRC. The GoC in collaboration with GAF AG hosted a side event at the COP 16 in Cancun aimed at presenting the national and sub-national REDD activities in Cameroon while the government of the DRC (GoDRC) is engaged since 2009 in organizing REDD+ side events. As one regional expert noted:

“While Cameroon has been hesitant to fully engage with partners during the UNFCCC negotiation process, DRC has seized the opportunity and is proactively organizing numerous REDD+ side events”.

The GoDRC uses side events not only as a platform for communicating and showcasing progress on REDD+ at national and sub-national levels but also as a means to reach out to REDD+ donors by effectively communicating their REDD+ achievements and planned activities in the coming months and years. In some cases such as in COP 18 in Doha, the government took the lead in organizing a side event aimed at announcing its new national REDD+ trust fund and national REDD+ strategy framework. In others such as in COP 17 in Durban, the GoDRC collaborated with other organizations such as WWF and USAID–CARPE to present DRC’s national registry of REDD+ initiatives, land satellite monitoring system for REDD+ and sub-national (Mai–Ndombe) REDD+ integrated approach. Another common form of participation and showcasing by both governments has been through presentations in side events organized by other organizations.

4.1.3. International REDD+ Support Process

DRC is a member of both the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank and the UN–REDD readiness mechanisms. Cameroon, on the other hand, is a member country of FCPF and is currently following the procedures to become a UN–REDD country. The UN–REDD Programme is therefore strongly involved in supporting the REDD+ process in DRC. The FCPF and UN-REDD provide funds to their member countries to support REDD+ implementation. The initial stage of the implementation requires countries to carry out readiness mechanisms to prepare countries for REDD+ and a carbon mechanism to test carbon finance transactions. Cameroon and DRC are in the process of carrying out REDD+ activities. DRC has completed the readiness phase and is now entering the investment phase of REDD while Cameroon is still at the readiness phase. Milestones and activities

under the readiness phase include the preparation of a Readiness Plan Idea Note (R–PIN) followed by the elaboration of the R–PP and then the development of a national REDD+ strategy—which for Cameroon, is expected to be finalized by 2015. For the investment phase, DRC is mobilizing funds from diverse investors including the FCPF, UN–REDD, FIP, overseas development assistants as well as the private sector actors to develop an Emission Reduction Programme (ERP) by the end of 2015. The draft ERP of DRC has been validated by the FCPF would lead to the signing of an emission reduction purchasing agreement (ERPA) with the FCPF carbon fund. After this phase, DRC will hopefully enter the implementation phase of REDD+ by the end of 2016.

The progress made by the DRC can be explained by the fast speed at which DRC has employed in joining the FCPF and UN–REDD readiness mechanisms. These mechanisms usually operate on a first come first serve basis provided all the documentation are compiled and procedures respected. Cameroon on the other hand has been slow in joining the UN–REDD and now finds itself in a situation where many other countries are also applying to become UN–REDD member countries. Moreover, UN–REDD financial resources are limited and cannot provide all the REDD+ support requested by countries.

4.1.4. Multilateral and Bilateral Financial Flows

An estimated 60 REDD+ related project activities totaling 146 million USD are implemented in the Congo Basin region of which about 35% and 17% are respectively located in DRC and Cameroon [18]. As one regional expert explained:

“The huge influx of REDD+ funds into DRC is an indicator of their good cooperation and relations with bilateral and multilateral institutions. Moreover, this influx can also be explained by the large forest cover of DRC—constituting more than 50% of the entire Congo Basin forests”.

In this paper, it is important to note that REDD+ related project activities include both activities that were designed as REDD+ projects and also related activities that were not designed as REDD+ projects but indirectly contribute to the goals of REDD+ projects. These projects are mainly funded through bilateral and multilateral initiatives (see Table 5) with the highest funds coming from UNFCCC fast start funds, followed by the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), FCPF, USAID/CARPE regional, UN–REDD, and Forest Investment Programme (FIP). Behind these initiatives, Norway, through its International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), remains the biggest single contributor—USD 83 million to CBFF, USD 150 million to FIP, USD 83 million to FCPF and USD 120 million to UN-REDD programme. Most of these funds have rather trickled down to the national REDD+ process of DRC and not Cameroon as illustrated in Table 5. In the words of a regional expert:

“The two countries benefit from different types of financial supports from partners. DRC receives REDD+ funds from many sources with multiple forms of benefits while in Cameroon, REDD+ partners have regrouped under the CCPM and the REDD+ sub-group to fund REDD+ activities”.

The DRC national REDD+ process (R–PP, ER–PIN, national strategy) enjoys a strong technical and financial support, as well as physical presence from the biggest REDD+ initiatives—UN–REDD and FCPF, which is not the case with Cameroon. Moreover, DRC, and not Cameroon, represents a priority country for the biggest REDD+ donor country—Norway.

Table 5. Key multilateral and bilateral REDD+ donors in Cameroon and DRC.

REDD+ Fund	Contribution to REDD+ Process	
	Cameroon	DRC
Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF)	Low	High
Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)	High	High
UN-REDD Programme	Nil	High
Forest Investment Programme (FIP)	Nil	High
Germany's International Climate Initiative/GIZ	High	High
France/AFD	Medium	Medium
Japan's Fast Start Finance/JICA	High	High
Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative/NORAD	Low	High
UK's International Climate Fund	Low	Medium
USA (CARPE)	Low	High

Note: The scoring of the contributions take into account potential, approved and disbursed funds from the donors. Sources: [19–23].

4.2. National Actions

4.2.1. Resolution of Rights (Carbon Ownership and Tenure)

In Cameroon, carbon rights remain vague and the current regulatory framework does not distinguish between trees and the carbon contained in them [24]. Additionally, while some indigenous and local communities have the rights of access to forest resources all naturally growing trees in Cameroon that have not been planted belong to the State and even those planted on private land without a deed still remain state property [25]. While the DRC has a policy document that partly addresses land management and tenure rights at a local level for REDD+ implementation, the issue of the unresolved tenure rights arrangement in the implementation of the REDD+ mechanism still prevails in the country. As Counsell [26] explains, indigenous communities in the DRC still have minimal rights to land and forest resources. The author establishes that forest ownership and user rights in the DRC are still regulated by the country's Forest Code of 2002 which arrogates forest ownership over the national territory to the state.

These findings from Cameroon and DRC are in line with many other REDD+ countries that have so far not deliberated on carbon right issues in their R-PP [27]. As DRC and Cameroon (at some point) move from the readiness (R-PP) to the investment phase of REDD+ (ER-P), issues linked to carbon rights may or may not be addressed. This is further supported by conflicting views from scholars. So far, some scholars argue that carbon right should be separated from land and forest rights [27] and carbon right holders of any REDD+ programs or project would have to be identified and held liable in the event of carbon reversal [28]. Another group of scholars on the other hand [29] claim that linking carbon rights to land tenure confuses social justice and rent-seeking and that land or tree tenure rights are more important issues to address and not carbon rights. For Cameroon, it will become even more complicated to resolve issues on carbon right because all issues linked to forest are legally handled and managed by the ministry in charge of forestry (MINFOF) while issues linked to REDD+ are handled by the ministry in charge of the environment (MINEPDED).

4.2.2. National Forest Monitoring System and MRV

In order to better manage forest resources within the context of REDD+ implementation, a robust system for MRV of emissions must be developed. In addition, this system is developed in response to the relevant REDD+ decisions of the UNFCCC, in particular, Decision 1/CP.16. The decision requires developing country Parties that undertake REDD+ activities to develop a robust and transparent national forest monitoring system for REDD+ activities. As a party to the UNFCCC, Cameroon is in the process of developing an MRV system although many have pointed to the lack of both qualitative and quantitative human resources for MRV in the country [30].

The DRC seems to be a leader on REDD+ in Central Africa and is ahead of Cameroon in terms of putting in place an MRV system for REDD+ implementation. DRC launched a national system for forest monitoring in 2011 and identified two agencies that will manage MRV. The system has three major components: the forest cover tracking system, the national REDD+ registry, and a third-party independent platform (moabi) useful for validation and verification. Thanks to the funding and equipment donated by the government of Japan to the ministry in charge of REDD+ in DRC, which was used by the GoDRC to conduct different studies and research on MRV. Cameroon, on the other hand does not have an MRV system in place yet, but has also received a similar support and donation from Japan to conduct MRV studies and research under the Ministry in charge of Economy and Land Management (MINEPAT) and not the Ministry of Environment Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) which is responsible for REDD+ implementation. So far, there has been very little or no assimilation of the outcome into the national REDD+ process in Cameroon, probably due to weak inter-ministerial coordination and collaboration.

In Africa, the DRC is the first country to have developed a national forest monitoring system. This was done by the government in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Brazilian National Institute for Space Research (INPE), with financial support from the UN-REDD Programme. This system brings together data from many sources, and aims to combine them into a forest management tool related to REDD+ specifically and more generally on the DRC's forests policies and measures [31]. Furthermore, the system is currently running on a "beta version" as data is currently being processed and feedback from various national and international partners is being incorporated (Ibid).

On another note, unlike Cameroon, the DRC has established an on-line REDD+ National Registry to underpin the operationalization of regulations and procedures for the approval of national REDD+ projects in the county. Aquino and Guay [9] note that this registry is used for monitoring REDD+ projects in order to ensure that their proponents and financial partners do not engage in illegal activities like money laundering. Furthermore, they assert that this registry ensures that projects (i) are not counted twice; (ii) approved by multi-stakeholders National REDD Committee hence advancing their legitimacy; (iii) are endorsed under international accepted carbon and socio-environmental standards, within four years following national approval; (iv) report periodically on results that have been verified, carbon transaction, and lessons acquired.

4.2.3. Establishment of a Conflict Resolution Framework

The origin of many conflicts related to REDD+ are caused by contested statutory and customary tenures, diverse interest, exclusionary policies and overlapping land use actors and activities [32,33] In Cameroon, there are two potential types of conflicts that may arise in relation to REDD+ implementation including conflicts at the national institutional level and conflicts at the local project/program level. To address this problem, conflict management bodies existing at the local and national level are envisaged. Specifically, they include traditional chiefs and representatives of civil society that will be responsible for resolving conflicts at the local level, while the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice (through the local and national courts) will be responsible for resolving conflicts between the different ministerial departments [34]. A similar situation is observed in the DRC where local and national conflicts within the framework of REDD+ implementation will be addressed by traditional custodians and the judiciary sector respectively. This means that conflicts related to REDD+ shall be handled under existing conflict prevention and management structures in Cameroon and the DRC. Customary institutions, where present, shall likely manage conflicts at the local level while statutory institutions shall manage conflicts at the sub-national (department, region or province) and national levels. New institutions for conflict management will likely emerge only in situations where existing conflict resolution mechanisms fall short of their responsibility. Some scholars argue that if conflicts are effectively managed by such customary and statutory institutions, REDD+ may provide the opportunity to switch emission trajectory of a landscape at very low cost [33].

4.2.4. Development of REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP)

In August 2012, Cameroon's R-PP was finally crafted and submitted to the World Bank. After a thorough review process, this R-PP was finally endorsed by the Bank in February 2013. However, it is posited that the R-PP was delayed due to certain disagreements that the government had with the World Bank over the recruitment of international consultants for the development of this document [35]. This disagreement may have been a blessing, given that at the end, local consultants in collaboration with relevant government officials crafted the R-PP. That said, the country remains inflexible to international dynamics which seems to be slowing down the overall REDD+ implementation process. As one regional expert pointed out: "the REDD+ process in Cameroon is state-driven with a strong national ownership while the process in DRC is donor-driven and more flexible".

The R-PP of the DRC was approved by the World Bank in July 2010. Indeed, the DRC was the first African country to have an approved R-PP. However, unlike Cameroon, the document was developed mostly by international experts who might have had little knowledge and experience about the socio-economic, cultural, and ecological situation prevailing in the country. Additionally, the risk here is that since the document was crafted by international experts, local authorities might not have had a mastery of the document and process hence making it difficult for effective and efficient implementation. In the words of Aquino *et al.* [9], "the high level of reliance on external technical expertise in the design of a governance structure for REDD+ in the DRC reduces ownership by those government entities that will be responsible for running the daily operations in the future". On the other hand, the country seems to be flexible toward international expertise and, as a result, it could be

argued that this seems to be moving the REDD+ implementation process (including the development of the R-PP) at a faster rate than Cameroon.

4.2.5. Development of a National REDD+ Strategy and Fund

While Cameroon is still developing its REDD+ Strategy, the DRC has an almost complete National Strategy Framework developed since 2012 which will enable the country to tackle the principal causes of deforestation including, among others, slash and burn agriculture, wood fuel collection, mining, and forest fires [34]. Some of the fundamental strategies outlined in the framework that would be used to address these drivers include [34]:

- Development of national expertise on renewable energy technology;
- Creating favorable conditions for a harmonious and complementary development of all three types of agriculture (peasant, intermediate, industrial) using sustainable practices that minimize forest reduction like support for the adoption of improved cultural conservation methods and value chain development;
- Reinforce capacity building of the different actors (the state, logging and mining companies, forest-dependent communities) so that they can respect the prevailing relevant regulations as well as provisions contained in management plans designed to increase forest carbon stocks;
- Support participative and community management of natural resources and the economic valorization of these resources;
- Ameliorate the legal and institutional framework for REDD+ implementation and put in place different measures which permit secured land rights for local communities.

While the DRC is currently working towards the establishment of a National REDD+ Fund, no initiative of this nature is being contemplated in Cameroon. It is reported that this Fund will be independent from public administration, managed by an autonomous body, allocated according to guidelines from multi-stakeholder decision-making authority, focused on activities that contribute to the objectives of the National REDD+ Strategy, and disbursed in a transparent manner [35].

4.2.6. Platforms for Key Stakeholders' Participation

Following the introduction of REDD+, DRC and Cameroon introduced initiatives and institutional structures to prepare for the implementation of this mechanism. Prominent among these structures is the REDD+ Inter-ministerial Steering Committee which was created in 2009 and 2012 in the DRC and Cameroon, respectively. In both countries, this committee is headed by the Ministries in Charge of Environment and its overall role is to approve and pilot activities geared at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. It has a Technical Secretariat that coordinates all technical REDD+ activities and processes in both countries. More so, other key stakeholders from the civil society and indigenous peoples groups are represented in the Inter-ministerial Committee of both countries and participate in the national REDD+ process. As Fobissie *et al.* [36] opine, some members of the civil society contributed to the development of the country's R-PP document of Cameroon. Additionally, in order to include the views of indigenous and other local forest-dependent communities

in the R-PP of Cameroon, a total of five national public consultation and participatory meetings, as well as thirty–five sensitization and capacity building workshops were organized in the different agro-ecological regions of Cameroon. In these meetings, there was a fairly good representation and participation of members of the Civil Society REDD+ Platform such as the Center for Environment and Development (CED), Research Network for Concerted Actions for Pygmy People (RACOPY) and Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA). Similarly, in DRC, the Civil Society REDD+ Working Group members participate in REDD+ outreach and communication activities under the information, education and communication cell of DRC national REDD+ coordination. However, it is argued that the effective and meaningful participation of civil society and indigenous groups in the national REDD+ processes of DRC and Cameroon remains highly debatable and controversial [35,37]. This was further corroborated by some of the interviewees who opined that:

“In Cameroon, there is a stronger engagement of parliamentarians and women in the REDD+ process” (Expert from Republic of Congo). “In DRC, the civil society is very much coherent than in Cameroon and they work in a more positive manner with the government” (Cameroon Expert). “In DRC, the civil society organizations are not adequately involved in the REDD+ process. They lack the resources to implement their activities, are often manipulated and play little or no role in the decision making process” (DRC Expert).

4.2.7. REDD+ Demonstrations and Private Sector Investments

As of 2011, a total of 15 REDD+ demonstration projects were designed in the DRC to target the voluntary carbon market—which is different from REDD+ related activities that are not targeting the carbon market. A variety of actors are involved in these demonstrations including international and national NGOs, the private sector, indigenous and local communities, strategic funding partners, religious groups, and the academia. Many of the demonstrations cover one or more diverse areas including aspects of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, financing and benefit sharing mechanisms, indigenous people’s rights, safeguards, participatory land use zoning, governance structures, MRV *etc.* Interestingly, very few of such projects exist in Cameroon. The private sector investments in REDD+ is still very weak with a few feasibility studies and a demonstration project respectively conducted around the Dja reserve, the Takamanada area, the Ngoyla-Mintom forest block and Jom-Lomie forests by USA-based Global Green Carbon, WCS, WWC and CED payments for environmental services (PES) project. Furthermore, these demonstration projects are still at an embryonic state mainly due to institutional and government procedural challenges. An expert from Cameroon provided a specific perspective of the situation:

“I remember it was more difficult in Cameroon to understand the potential value-addition for REDD+ when it came to the case of Ngoyla-Mintom forest block and transforming logging concession into conservation concession in an area of very high biodiversity. Despite the fact that a private company proposed Cameroon some money to transform the logging concessions into REDD+ conservation concessions, the Ministry in Charge of Forestry and wildlife (MINFOF) did not feel comfortable and turned down the offer”.

This situation is completely different from the DRC, where a regulatory framework concerning the establishment and approval of REDD+ projects exists with fewer institutional challenges. As a result,

private sector actors from different parts of the world are increasingly playing bigger roles as DRC enters the investment phase especially in the establishment of its Emission Reduction Programme (ERP) over a 12 M ha forest landscape in the future Mai Ndombe Province. Wildlife Works Carbon and Ecosystem Restoration Associates (ERA-WWC) for example are implementing a Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and Climate Community and Biodiversity (CCB) validated and verified emissions reduction project within the Mai Ndombe province and are strongly involved together with other private agricultural and legal logging companies as well as WWF in the drafting of DRC ERP. Within the framework of the ERP, a draft REDD+ governance implementation framework, a verification system and financing plan including benefit sharing mechanism are proposed, as well as the integration of measurable non-carbon benefits linked to rights, governance, biodiversity, and livelihood.

4.2.8. Benefit Sharing Mechanism

One of the main benefit sharing schemes for proceeds emanating from forest exploitation in Cameroon is the Annual Forest Fees (AFF) allocation. Cameroon's R-PIN establishes that one way by which benefits obtained from REDD+ could be shared with local communities is via the AFF. According to the prevailing regulations (Order No. 0520 /MINATP/MINFI/MINFOF of 2010) 50% of these funds must be channel into the State treasury, 20% to the municipality that covers the jurisdiction where the forestry operation is conducted, 20% to FEICOM (a State institution providing support to municipalities) for sharing with other municipalities in Cameroon, and 10% to the communities where the forestry operation is found. The funds allocated to the communities must pass through the council that endorses any developmental project submitted by the communities [35]. Many have questioned this proposal for benefit sharing arguing that the AFF framework, which has been in place for over a decade, has not provided the requisite platform for socio-economic development within local forest-dependent-communities in Cameroon [35,38–40].

In the DRC, the main benefit sharing scheme for the distribution of proceed emanating from the exploitation of natural resources is the provision contained in the 2002 Mining and Forest Codes which ordains that a portion of the proceeds from natural resources exploitation should be transferred to the provinces and territories in the following proportions: 40% for the provinces, including 15% for the territories [41]. However, as Mpoyi *et al.* note [42], in a decentralized systems like the one prevailing in the DRC the distribution of benefits and payments of revenue from natural resource exploitation has resulted in serious tension between the central and provincial government. To attract early investment in REDD+ other stakeholders like the UN Development Programme, the State, and civil society have discussed about the possibility of creating a REDD+ Multi-Donor Trust Fund [43].

The current benefit sharing experiences of Cameroon and the DRC show that a REDD+ mechanism or program in these countries will likely have at the national level a quota approach to benefit sharing and a very context specific approach at the local community level. At the national or macro scale, three types of key actors or institutions may share such benefits and will likely include the local communities, the private sector and the government who are all involved in large scale REDD+ implementation. After receiving their share at the macro scale as a community and based on their performances, we argue that the real tension and challenge related to REDD+ benefit sharing may likely emanate from the local or micro scale. At this local scale, elite influence and capture provides a big risk for the

emergence of conflict. Customary rules may set in to decide on how benefits shall be shared considering the fact that the elderly population cannot be actively involved in REDD+ yet they would likely need some rewards or support from the REDD+ project. Moreover, the community-based approach to REDD+ benefit sharing may face the challenge of sharing benefits equally to community members even if some of them are not actually respecting and performing their roles and responsibilities as expected. In such a situation, there is a tendency for such community benefit sharing to evolve to two types of approaches. One will be a benefit sharing approach that provides facilities to be used by everybody in the community such as electricity, pipe born water, village hall *etc.* In addition, the other benefit sharing will strictly focus on individuals or households that have performed “MRVed” activities.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Our analysis shows that efforts by the DRC and Cameroon around REDD+ policy approaches are mainly manifested in the same national and international platforms and processes under FCPF, UN-REDD initiatives, and UNFCCC COPs. At the Congo Basin regional level, both countries share similar REDD+ platforms such as the COMIFAC Climate Working Group where preparations before, during, and after UNFCCC COP and SBSTA/SBI engagements are made. Similarly, they are signatories of the Congo Declaration aimed at promoting the implementation of REDD+ mechanisms, as well as members of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN), where common REDD+ negotiations positions are taken. In both countries, the notion of effective participation of stakeholders remains a highly contested issue. Very little has been deliberated as far as carbon rights, benefit sharing and conflict resolution mechanisms are concerned. For benefit sharing and conflict resolution mechanisms, both countries will likely use or modify existing laws and practices and these mechanisms may likely occur at both the national and local levels.

The outcomes are completely different for both countries and are largely influenced by the differences in their engagement style, ministerial/sectorial coordination, strategic approaches, and effective communication of REDD+ achievements. The main difference has been the higher interest of multilateral and bilateral donors as well as international NGOs in promoting REDD+ in DRC compared to Cameroon. This can be explained by the large size of the DRC's dense forest, which is 5.5 times larger than Cameroon's forest; the relatively more flexible approach of the Government of DRC to work with international experts; favorable conditions for private sector investment; and coordination of REDD+ by the same ministry in charge of forest. Moreover, DRC has taken personal steps to increase its presence and visibility in COP event and to showcase its achievements within international fora by effectively packaging and communicating achieved, current and planned REDD+ activities and moves. This can also be explained by the high higher level of funds channeled to REDD+ process both by the government of DRC and diverse international funding agencies. During COP events for the past 8 years for example, delegates from DRC were 5 times more than delegates from Cameroon. Cameroon on the other hand has not been very successful in pulling REDD+ investments from multilateral and bilateral donors. This is because its determination to pursue REDD+ largely rests on: national experts; two different ministries that are in charge of forest and REDD+

(making coordination and implementation very challenging); and poor marketing and communication of REDD+ achievements and future plans.

While Cameroon and the DRC have made some fundamental steps in advancing the REDD+ readiness process in their respective countries, this study has revealed that both countries still face a series of challenges that must be addressed as a fundamental pre-requisite for successful REDD+ implementation. These challenges differ from one country to the other and it is worth noting that each country can draw lessons from the other. Therefore, policy action is needed to overcome these challenges. They include:

- Addressing issues relating to land and forest tenure in both countries by recognizing ownership rights of local communities to trees. Indeed, secured land and forest tenure is a major precondition for effective and efficient implementation of REDD+ projects and allow actors at the community level the space and time to establish forest management systems [5,44,45].
- Providing capacity building by national and international experts. Successful REDD+ implementation hinges on a highly skilled workforce. Training, especially in the area of MRV, in the two countries is considered vital.
- Embracing international dynamics for advancing REDD+ implementation in Cameroon. This could be achieved if the government of Cameroon creates strategic partnerships with some renowned foreign bodies, international organizations, and consultancy firms. These partnerships are vital in that some of them (e.g., UNREDD, CIRAD, Catholic University of Louvain, WWF, WWC-ERA *etc.*) have successfully provided advice on REDD+ implementation in other countries in Central Africa (like the DRC) that could be beneficial to stakeholders driving the REDD+ implementation process in Cameroon. Moreover, these international partners often have closer relations with and better understanding of the donor countries and the international dimension of REDD+ (politics, funding, procedures *etc.*).
- Donor efforts that concentrate in more than one country in the Congo Basin region. A focus almost entirely on DRC will undermine the goal of the Congo Declaration. Donor signatory countries of the Congo Declaration (Norway, EU, Australia, USA, Canada, Germany, UK and France) should therefore mobilize their efforts to re-energize and fund the implementation plan of the Congo Declaration in the entire Congo Basin region. In doing so, Congo Basin countries should work together with donor countries to promote REDD+ activities and conserve the Congo Basin forests.
- A critical mass or pool of REDD+ technicians and experts working in REDD+ projects in the COMIFAC countries should be mobilized and put at the disposal of COMIFAC Climate Working Group. This pool of REDD+ experts should backstop the common statements and negotiation position of COMIFAC by developing timely and relevant technical and methodological documents to inform the development of positions of COMIFAC during SBSTA and COP negotiations.
- Strengthening of English language skills of negotiators. Behind closed doors, UNFCCC COP negotiations on different technical, financial, and implementation issues are predominantly in English, while a majority of delegates from Cameroon and DRC are French speaking which therefore limits their ability to present their views and positions during debates. To address this gap, the team of delegates from these countries must be composed of English speaking delegates who can, from time to time, defend the position of Cameroon and DRC.

- While the GoDRC should keep the current momentum and visibility during future COP and SBSTA/SBI sessions, the GoC should explore financial options to mobilize and increase the number and richness of delegates with clear tasks and functions during future COP and SBSTA/SBI sessions. At the same time, a clear political strategy should be mapped out on how to interact, attract, and engage with key REDD+ donors who are not yet very committed to promoting REDD+ in Cameroon. One key way is to organize side events in collaboration with other partners—in this case, Cameroon can learn from DRC.
- The governments of both countries (especially Cameroon) with the guidance of their respective REDD+ Technical Secretariats and REDD+ Steering Committees, have to create suitable legal environments to encourage, attract and protect private sector investments in REDD+ as an alternative green development path that preserves the forest and provides opportunities for social and economic development.
- An FPIC (Free Prior and Informed Consent) document should be developed, fully implemented and respected in Cameroon and DRC to ensure that the concerns of all parties are well captured and used in the designing and implementation of a meaningful and effective participatory REDD+ process that addresses drivers of deforestation and responds to the social and economic aspirations of the population.
- Review the current forest benefit schemes in both the DRC and Cameroon to adopt elements that are feasible with a benefit sharing context of REDD+. Any adopted REDD+ benefit sharing scheme should ensure that a much higher proportion is allocated to forest-dependent communities who shall in many cases be at the fore front of REDD+ implementation on the ground.

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Author Contributions

Kalame Fobissie and Dieudonne Alemagi designed, collected and analyzed data, wrote and revised the manuscript. Peter Minang contributed in the design, writing and revision of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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